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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2006

In Today's Papers

Talabani Threatens Turkey with Supporting Illegal Elements
All papers report Iraqi President Jalal Talabani "threatened" that Iraq could cause trouble for Turkey as well as Iran and Syria by supporting "the opposition" in their countries, if they do not stop interfering in Iraq's internal affairs. "We can try to make trouble for Iran, Syria and Turkey as they are doing for us, but we are not doing it," Talabani told the National Public Radio in Washington. The word "opposition" in Talabani's statement implicitly refers to the outlawed PKK based in northern Iraq, according to Turkish papers. Papers note that only a couple of days ago Talabani was in New York for UN General Assembly meetings, telling Newsweek that he had persuaded the PKK to announce a ceasefire soon. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources in New York said the statement was unacceptable. MFA Spokesman Namik Tan said in a statement, "Turkey maintains contacts with all political groups in Iraq, working toward Iraq's stability in a constructive manner. Turkey will continue to stand with the Iraqi people in resolving their problems and establishment of peace and stability."

Commenting in the mass appeal Hurriyet, Oktay Eksi concludes that Talabani has "joined the US" in "distracting Turkey" on the PKK issue: "Although he has had the title of president of Iraq since March of last year, Talabani comes with a history of easily telling lies and spinning the truth. Just two days ago he was speaking about the PKK decision to declare a ceasefire, and now he is talking about supporting opposition groups in Turkey. First of all, his statement about a PKK ceasefire shows nothing but his friendly relations with the PKK. It is also true that he was not telling the truth when he promised Turkish officials in Baghdad he would not allow any terrorist elements against Turkey to operate in Iraq. Talabani and the Iraqi government have made similar promises before. Recent events indicate that Iraq has joined the US in the process of distracting Turkey's attention, as they continue to fool Turkey. Given the facts, there is absolutely no way to be hopeful about Talabani."

Turkish Parliament Delegation Visits Northern Iraq

All papers report a Turkish parliamentary delegation, including MP Turhan Comez, from the ruling AKP, and MP Orhan Diren, from the opposition CHP, arrived in Erbil city late on Monday for a four-day visit to northern Iraq. The delegation's convoy was stopped at the entrance of Kirkuk due to landmines planted on the road, and moved on after US troops cleared them. At a meeting with the head of the Kirkuk local assembly, Comez reacted to an antique map on the wall depicting southeast Turkey and Kirkuk as parts of Kurdistan, by saying official institutions should have official maps. Visiting Turks are scheduled to meet with the head of the Turkmen Council as well as the governor of Kirkuk during their stay.

Kurdish Mayors Defend Free Speech at Court

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report 56

Kurdish mayors stood trial Tuesday in Diyarbakir, accused of charges of helping terrorists by asking in a letter to Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen not to take off the air the Copenhagen-based pro-Kurdish Roj TV. The mayors defended their letter as free speech. "We are standing behind each of the 405 words in our letter. It points to the need to tolerate opposition and the establishment of a democratic system," they told the court. A prosecutor demands up to 15 years in prison for the mayors. The trial was adjourned until November 21.

Kurdish Organization Charged with Article 301

Yeni Safak reports Ankara Press Prosecutor's Office has launched a lawsuit against the Ankara-based Kurdish Democracy Forum and Academic Research Association for violating Article 301 by "not including" in its regulations any provision pertaining to "Turkishness." The chairman of the association, Feridun Yazar, said

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their regulations carried not a single article which would be interpreted as "insulting Turkishness." "Our regulation claiming the existence and improvement of Kurdish language and literature has been perceived as an insult to the Turkish identity. Following the same logic, you can say that Kurdish broadcasts on the state TV TRT constitute an insult on the Turkish identity," Yazar said.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Erdogan pledged to make adjustments to Article 301 if the provision restricts legitimate rights and freedoms while fighting against crime. The opposition CHP leader Baykal rejected the call of Erdogan saying Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands and France had provisions similar to Article 301. "Erdogan wants a partner in crime to set free insulting the Turkish identity," Baykal said, adding CHP would not support such moves.

Editorial Commentary on the Situation of Minorities in Turkey

Mehmet Ali Birand wrote in the tabloid Posta (9/27): Forgetting the ignorant masses, some of the things our well-educated people write and say are enough to demonstrate the presence of a secret enmity toward minorities in Turkey. There are those who claim that the land of the country is supposedly being sold to foreigners almost free of charge. Some claim that property returned to Turkey during the population exchange with Greece in the 1920s is to be given back. Still others claim that associations in the future will turn into a political power, and there are those who even assert that non-Muslim citizens could take over Hagia Sofia and set up a religious state such as the Vatican. It is simply unbelievable. The worst is that this view is held by the opposition CHP. The whole thing reflects absolute ignorant behavior. We should be able to realize that where Turkey stands now. While trying to create a country proud of its minorities regardless of their religions and a country enriched by its minorities, we ended up living with small-minded administrators afraid of their own shadows and too blind to realize the country's greatness. What a shame."

Greek Coast Guard Dumps Immigrants Off Izmir Coast

Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal and Zaman report a Greek Coast Guard boat took some 40 illegal immigrants before they landed on the Greek island Chios back to the Turkish territorial waters before dumping them overboard in the sea off the city of Izmir on the Aegean coast. Three Tunisians, one Palestinian, one Algerian and

one Iraqi drowned while trying to swim to the shore.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Professor Ali Bardakoglu, the head of Turkish Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has expressed content with Pope Benedict XVI' expression of regret for his statements infuriating the Islamic world and the pontiff's comments highlighting the importance of dialogue between religions.
- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul continues his visit of the United States to join the meetings of the UN General Assembly until September 29.
- State Minister Ali Babacan will travel to Italy to participate in a conference held by Morgan Stanley in Rome where he will also meet with Prime Minister Prodi and Foreign Minister D'Alema.
- Seven suspects preparing for terrorist attacks have been captured in Diyarbakir and Istanbul.
- Cisco Systems says it would invest up to USD 275 million to promote technology projects in Turkey over a five-year period.

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International News

- During the Iraqi parliamentary discussions of a draft bill on federalism, some MPs objected to a map drawn up by the Kurds in northern Iraq, which showed the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk as part of the Kurdish area.
- The European Commission put on a green light to the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania on January 1 next year.
- President Bush said it is naive and a mistake to think that the war in Iraq has worsened terrorism.
- A Taliban leader denied a French daily reporting Osama bin Ladin was dead, saying the head of al-Qaeda is alive.

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